

## **MRIP Operations Team**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Name:**

Operations Team (OT)

#### **Goals:**

- Provide a National framework for developing, testing, and recommending certification of improved methodologies for collection and analysis of marine recreational fisheries statistics.
- Develop and provide nationally consistent information and advice regarding priorities for NMFS/MRIP investment in expanding the implementation and operational support of regional recreational fishing surveys.

#### **Membership:**

Regional representation (Western Pacific, Alaska, Pacific Coast, Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Coast, Caribbean)

Criteria for membership includes expertise in one or more of the following:

- Fisheries management
- Stock assessment science
- Survey statistics
- Survey management
- Fisheries resources economics, sociology, and cultural anthropology

The OT recommends new members and changes in the composition of its membership to the Executive Steering Committee (ESC), consistent with membership criteria and changing program needs.

The chairperson of the OT shall be designated by the ESC.

#### **Stakeholder Involvement:**

Stakeholders who have relevant knowledge of the subject at hand, including members of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) and its Recreational Fisheries Working Group, will support the OT on an *ad hoc* basis.

#### **Communication:**

The OT will meet at least once a year to set research priorities for the pertinent funding cycle, to update information on recreational survey implementation status, and to develop recommendations to the ESC on priorities for NMFS to make additional regional investments in survey implementation and operations.

The OT will receive regular updates of project status as submitted by each project's lead investigator(s).

The OT will report to the ESC all decisions on research priorities, the results of completed projects, and recommendations to endorse or reject survey methods or practices. The OT will also report its findings and recommendations to the ESC regarding priorities for NMFS/MRIP support for, and investment in, implementing survey improvements, enhancing data collection, and supporting ongoing regional survey operations.

The OT Chair will provide the MRIP leadership with status updates upon request.

### **Ongoing Role and Responsibilities:**

**Development of recreational fisheries survey designs and methodologies:** Each year the OT will establish and prioritize research needs that respond to the recommendations of the NRC Report or address congressional mandates and emerging management and science needs. These needs will subsequently be addressed through the development and implementation of research projects. Research needs may include broad categories that require strategic implementation of sequential projects, or discreet needs that can be addressed with minimal or no follow-up.

The OT may establish work groups and/or project teams to develop project proposals and oversee project completion. Such work groups and project teams will have the appropriate expertise and experience to complete the assigned tasks. Projects can be specific to the needs of a region provided they will help address program priorities.

The OT will meet to review all project proposals and select those that will be recommended for funding. The Chair will forward funding recommendations to the ESC.

Final project reports will be reviewed by the OT, which will take one of the following actions:

- Recommend the project results be peer reviewed, if needed;
- Recommend a follow-up project;
- Certify the tested methodology as acceptable for use; or
- Reject the project's findings.

**Development of recommendations for NMFS/MRIP to make additional investments in survey implementation and operations:**

With support from NMFS/ST staff, the OT will establish and maintain an inventory of all recreational fishing catch and effort surveys administered by NMFS and the states. The inventory will include, without limitation: basic description of survey methods and design; principal sponsors, and sources and amounts of funding; identification of Regional Implementation Teams (e.g., FINs) and governance structures; and, whether each survey (alone or in combination with other surveys being implemented in a region):

- Utilizes an MRIP-certified survey design or methodology;
- Conforms to current MRIP standards for survey coverage and basic data elements, as well as any future standards adopted by the program  
([http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/recreational/pdf/National\\_Standards\\_for\\_Survey\\_Coverage\\_and\\_Data\\_Elements.pdf](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/recreational/pdf/National_Standards_for_Survey_Coverage_and_Data_Elements.pdf));
- Provides recreational (or non-commercial) catch estimates for fisheries managed under MSRA--including Atlantic HMS--or jointly by the states and NMFS that are deemed by the MRIP Regional Implementation Team to be sufficient to:
  - Complete reliable stock assessments;
  - Support development of annual catch limits that meet MSRA requirements; and
  - Support development of recreational regulations that minimize triggering of accountability measures.

The OT will establish a cross-regional process for prioritizing options for NMFS/MRIP investment in implementation of improved recreational fishing data collection methods based on the foregoing characteristics of surveys and resultant recreational statistics. The OT will periodically, but at least annually update the survey inventory and provide updated recommendations on investment priorities.

The OT will also establish and maintain a process for assessing, through the Regional Implementation Teams, additional needs of stakeholder groups beyond those supported by ongoing surveys. Examples could include increased sampling to provide greater precision, resolution or coverage; enhanced timeliness of receipt of catch statistics; or specialized survey designs to fulfill the requirements of fishery management plans and regulations in place or that the managers intend to adopt.